

Carol Coles

From: Carol Coles
Sent: Wednesday, July 21, 2010 4:29 PM
To: *everyone; _Council Members; Andy Rieger; Denise Holder; Eddie Sims; Jane Cannon; KGOU; KOCO; KOKH; Ktok; KTOK; Norman News; Oklahoma Daily
Subject: Bicycle Safety

City of Norman
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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Bicycles have been a popular mode of transportation in Norman for many years. Between college students, children, people reducing fuel use and pollution, and recreational or competitive bikers, a good argument can be made that bicycle use in Norman is more prevalent than in most Oklahoma communities. An unfortunate result of the widespread use is the increased exposure of bicyclists to traffic hazards.

From January 2010 through June 2010 the Norman Police Department has investigated seventeen collisions involving bicyclist which indicates an average of 2.8 per month. By comparison, in 2009 the Norman Police Department investigated thirty-five collisions with an indicated average of 2.9 per month.

A frequent cause of accidents involving bicycles is vehicles getting too close when passing them, and either sideswiping them, hitting them with a side view mirror or causing them to run off the road and crash. The Oklahoma Legislature thought this to be a serious enough hazard that they enacted legislation requiring motorists to give bicyclists a wide berth, as noted below:

Title 47, Section 11-1208 specifies:

A. When overtaking and passing a bicycle proceeding in the same direction, a person driving a motor vehicle shall exercise due care by leaving a safe distance between the motor vehicle and the bicycle of not less than three (3) feet until the motor vehicle is safely past the overtaken bicycle.

B. If a person violates the provisions of subsection A of this section and the violation results in a collision causing serious physical injury to another person, the person shall be subject to a fine of not more than Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00).

C. If a person violates the provisions of subsection A of this section and the violation results in the death of another person, the person shall be subject to a fine of not more than One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00), in addition to any other penalties prescribed by law.

7/21/2010

The City of Norman supports bicycle use, and wants riders to be able to pursue this activity as safely as possible. We therefore urge motorists to be attentive to bicyclists in their midst, to recognize that bicyclists have the same rights and obligations as they do in the use of city streets, and to move over when passing.

Bicyclists can do a lot to enhance their safety as well. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration makes the following recommendations:

- Choose the correct bike for the type of riding for which you will use it.
- Ensure that the bike is of the correct size for the rider, and that the seat and handlebars are adjusted to the right height.
- Pay attention to equipment issues:
 - All riders should wear a good, properly fitted helmet
 - Have a proper headlight and reflector or taillight if riding at night
 - Day or night, increase your visibility by wearing brightly colored clothing
 - Prior to every ride, do the **ABC Quick Check**:
 - Air** – check to ensure that tires are properly inflated
 - Brakes** – ensure that brakes are working properly
 - Crank, Chain, Cassette** – make sure that the pedals, crank, chain, and derailleur are secure and functioning properly
 - Quick** – make sure that wheels are properly seated in their dropouts and that quick release nuts are tight
 - Check** – Check all other equipment and systems to prevent equipment related problems.
- Remember that bicyclists on the streets and roadways are subject to the same laws and rules as motor vehicles. This means they must ride to the right of the center line in the same direction as traffic, and must obey all signs, signals, and street markings. Municipal ordinances specific to bicycles are found in Chapter 20 of the Code of Ordinances, and include Section 20-401 through 20-407, and Section 20-605. (These, and other ordinances may be viewed on the City’s website at www.NormanOK.gov . (On the home page, go to the right under “Helpful Links” and click “City Ordinances.”)
- Ride defensively. Bicyclists are less visible than larger vehicles, so they must be prepared for vehicles turning in front of them, failing to yield to them, or pulling out in front of them.
- Be predictable – signal turns and avoid sudden changes in direction,
- Avoid road hazards – such things as bicycle wheels dropping into potholes or storm grates, and slick pavements can cause spills.

By working together to improve safety, police, motorists, and bicyclists can do much to reduce accidents and injuries in Norman.